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Harper Government Launches National Web-Based Pre-Budget Consultations: A First for Canada

For the first time ever, a federal government is encouraging Canadians from coast to coast to coast to participate in the budget process online. Minister of Finance James M. Flaherty today launched an online consultation process on the Department's website to give Canadians an opportunity to provide their views to the Government during the pre-budget consultation period.

"This approach opens the pre-budget consultations up to all Canadians, giving taxpayers in every corner of this vast country an opportunity to share their views," said Minister Flaherty. "This is another example of how the new government is taking accountability and openness to a higher level."

Making government accountable to Canadians is a key priority, and was outlined in the Speech from the Throne on Tuesday, April 4. This government's agenda to deliver real results to Canadians includes the following five key priorities:

- Cleaning up government, by passing the Federal Accountability Act;
- Reducing the tax burden of Canadians, starting with a one-percentage-point cut to the goods and services tax;
- Making our streets and communities safer, by cracking down on crime and introducing mandatory minimum sentences;
- Supporting families, by providing a $1,200 per year Choice in Child Care Allowance for each child under six, and providing tax credits to employers who cover the full cost of creating child care spaces; and
- Working with the provinces to improve health care, by establishing a Patient Wait Times Guarantee.

Minister Flaherty is seeking views and advice from all Canadians on how best to implement the Government's five priorities. He is also asking people to identify areas where the Government can spend less or deliver programs in a more efficient and effective way.

"I hope to gather innovative ideas not just for this year's budget, but for future budgets," said Minister Flaherty. "We have set priorities that are reasonable and affordable, and with help from Canadian families we will stick by them."

Minister Flaherty and Parliamentary Secretary Diane Ablonczy will also be meeting with stakeholders as part of the pre-budget consultation process, which ends April 19.

The Web consultation page, including a background document, can be found on the Department of Finance Canada website at www.fin.gc.ca/activty/consult_e.html.

Submissions can be made by e-mail at budget2006consult@fin.gc.ca or by fax at (613) 943-0938 (Number corrected April 19, 2006). As is customary in the traditional face-to-face pre-budget consultations, views submitted via the Web will be provided to the Minister and held confidential.

For further information, media may contact:

Eric Richer
Press Secretary
Office of the Minister of Finance
(613) 996-7861

David Gamble
Media Relations
Department of Finance Canada
(613) 996-8080

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